

Intangible Cultural Heritage Update

News and notes on
Newfoundland and Labrador's
Intangible Cultural
Heritage Program

September 2012
ISSN 1918-7408

ich@heritagefoundation.ca
Heritage Foundation of NL



In this issue:

- Page 1 ICH Workshops
- Page 2 Cemetery Restoration
- Page 3 Tea and Baskets at The Rooms
- Page 4 Boatbuilding
- Page 5 Job Posting

Two ICH Workshops

Hot on the heels of our successful workshop in Labrador, we are running two additional intangible cultural heritage workshops this autumn, one in Norris Point, the other in Trinity.

Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) is also known as “living heritage” and it encompasses many traditions, practices and customs of a group. These can include the stories we tell, the family events we celebrate, our community gatherings, the languages we speak, the songs that we sing, knowledge of

our natural spaces and our healing traditions.

The first is organized by Anita Best (contact abest@mun.ca to register). It will be held Sunday, September 30 from 1pm - 4:30 pm, at The Julia Ann Walsh Heritage Centre, Norris Point. Cost: \$15. Dale Jarvis, Provincial Intangible Cultural Heritage Officer will talk about ICH, what it is and how you can keep track of it in your community. Local folks will be on hand to show their ICH products. Dale will also help us to understand the logistics of planning an Oral History Project, really useful information before you dash out with your video camera or audio recorder to record Aunt Dot or Uncle Harry.

The second workshop is on Intangible Cultural Heritage Collections in Museums. It will be held 1:00 – 4:30 pm, on Friday, October 12, 2012 in Trinity, NL. In this workshop participants will learn how to document ICH and living traditions in their community, support and encourage the passing on of knowledge and skills, how to digitize this material for easier access, and explore the potential of ICH as a resource for community development.

There is an enrolment limit of 25 for the Trinity workshop. Financial assistance for transportation costs is available for MANL members: please contact the MANL office for more information. You may also visit www.museums.ca to find out more about the Canadian Museums Association Travel Bursary. For further information, please contact the MANL: manl@nf.aibn.com Ph 709-722-9034 Fax: 709-722-9035

Photo: making tea in Trinity, Doors Open, 2007

Restoring the Port Royal Cemetery

By Lisa Wilson

The oldest headstone in the Port Royal Cemetery is dated July 10 – 1879. It was erected by John Millar in memory of his wife Elizabeth, age 43 at the time of her death. When we first found this large relic it was laying on the ground, covered with moss and grass. There was black lichen on its surface obscuring the inscription. My initial field notes read: ‘headstone #35, broken, name unknown.’

After pulling the headstone from the ground and meticulously cleaning it, we were finally able to read the information it displayed—its importance as a historic object became clear. We then worked to provide it a secure concrete base and mortared its two pieces back together. Elizabeth Millar’s headstone is now standing and, for the first time in several decades, it can be viewed by visitors to the cemetery.

Restoring this headstone, along with thirty-four others in the Port Royal Cemetery, was part of a summer project that myself, along with folklorist Annie McEwan, and two other skilled individuals, were fortunate enough to participate in from Mid-June to September of this year.



When I was first asked to lead a restoration project in an isolated community, I first agreed, and then scratched my head—what is this going to involve? Given the location of Port Royal, I knew that our first challenge would be to prepare for a summer of isolation. Port Royal is a resettled town-site located on Long Island in Placentia Bay. This town was vacated in the late 1960s, but then repopulated as a cabin community in the early 90s. While it is unpopulated in winter, it is an energetic place in the summer with cabin-goers arriving to enjoy Port Royal as a second home. We had a lovely cabin to reside in for the summer, and people visited frequently, but we still had some challenges: our running water wasn’t drinkable, our electricity came from a generator, and almost all of our food and conservation supplies had to be brought in at the time of our arrival.

Just getting there with everything we needed for three months required a great deal of planning. The day we left we were exhausted—we had all just spent a full week ensuring that our endless checklists were checked off. When we arrived and unloaded our supplies from the boat, we couldn’t have been happier. It was a perfectly magical setting, and we had everything with us that we could possibly want.

The next obvious challenge was to learn about the restoration and conservation of historic headstones. Since there were no local experts to consult, I had to begin by researching best practices for headstone cleaning and repair. I learned that the most difficult thing we would face would be to bring the cemetery back to its original appearance without further damaging the headstones. Every step of the way we had to ensure that our work contributed to the longevity of these artifacts. Not only do they have historic value — telling the tale of the fishery, the tale of resettlement, and countless tales of loss — we saw that they also have personal value to the descendents of those buried here.





These headstones live on to validate several generations of community on Long Island, representing a history that those who experienced resettlement don't wish to forget.

Keeping this in mind, we went to work landscaping the cemetery, removing biological growth from the headstones, painting lettering that had faded, putting up fallen headstones, straightening leaning headstones, and building and painting crosses to replace ones that had rotted. We also searched for evidence of unmarked graves so that we could commemorate these long-forgotten individuals with wooden markers. While a large section of the graveyard was



clearly riddled with unmarked graves (likely from the 1800s), it was difficult to find the evidence we were looking for. Still, where we saw obvious mounds and dips, we put up a small marker in remembrance.

Throughout the course of this three-month project, we brought thirty-five headstones and ten wooden crosses back to their original condition, and marked six previously unmarked graves. Overall the project was a success, and having spent such a wonderful summer there, it is undeniable that the results of this project should be dedicated to the members of the Port Royal community, who have worked hard to make it the place it is today.

Coffee and Culture Tea & Baskets

October 11th, 2012

2:30pm

The Rooms Theatre, St. John's

Baskets remind us of a simpler time when many everyday objects were made by hand. Join folklorist Dale Jarvis for tea (or coffee) as he displays historic baskets from Mi'kmaw traditions to mill baskets and tells us about the people who used them.

Free with admission to The Rooms.

Photo of trout basket, courtesy Anne Manuel



Bearing the Tradition: The Future of Wooden Boat Building

By Crystal Braye

This past summer the Wooden Boat Museum of Newfoundland and Labrador embarked on a documentation project in the Glovertown area, seeking local boat builders to share their knowledge about wooden boat traditions in the area.



With the collapse of the inshore fishery, the availability of fiberglass and aluminum as building materials, and other factors, the little wooden boats that once crowded our harbours are becoming few and far between. The number of individuals that can be found actively performing these traditional skills across the province is dwindling.

At an average age of sixty-eight, wooden boat builders in Newfoundland are well into their retirement years and there is a significant lack of boat building activity among younger generations. Those who learned their trade as a necessity now continue it has a hobby, and younger generations have not required the knowledge that was once essential to a life beside the sea.

But there is one young man in Traytown who hopes to these keep these skills alive, after all, “it’s not hard to carry around the things you know.” Eighteen year old Curtis Abbott has been helping his grandfather Tom Abbott build boats for as long as he can remember, “I guess there was never a time when I decided I wanted to learn it, I just grew up around it.”

Originally from Summerville, eighty-four year old Tom Abbott built his first boat at the age of twelve. He fondly recalls the time he spent watching his neighbor Abe Fry as he worked in his shed, “I would spend hours. I helped him to plank a boat. I’d go in there in the nighttime and help him, he lived alongside us. Hold onto a plank for him, and he’d show me that, then show me something else...it was right fun for me...”

Curtis has now built five speed boats with his grandfather, and while he is confident he can build one on his own, Tom is always eager to help.

“It’s nice when you can work together,” says Tom, “Curtis comes out here to the shed and he’s right happy. Whatever he wants to do he’ll do. There’s lots of tools and everything here for him.”

Tom is proud to share his knowledge with his grandson, but it’s the time they spend together that is most valuable. And Curtis agrees, noting that if it wasn’t for his grandfather he would not likely have an interest in boat building. “It keeps us together,” says Curtis.

Having recently graduated high school, Curtis has plans to become a crane operator, but hopes to continue building boats and other carpentry projects as a hobby.

Photos:

Top photo courtesy of Crystal Braye.

Bottom photo of Curtis Abbott at 3 years old courtesy of Rosalind Abbott.





Job Posting: Heritage Outreach Officer

The Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador (HFNL) is hiring a Heritage Outreach Officer to promote and assist in the delivery of heritage programs, under the direction of both the Executive Director, and the Intangible Cultural Heritage (ICH) Development Officer. The Heritage Outreach Officer will:

- Promote HFNL programs;
- Help establish heritage committees in participating communities;
- Assist the ICH Development Officer with cognitive mapping in heritage districts and other research projects;
- Prepare basic inventories of heritage assets;
- Assist with published reports and community presentations;
- Undertake activities that build community capacity for heritage districts and other heritage projects;
- Assist on projects that demonstrate the link between built heritage and ICH;
- Assist core HFNL staff with maintenance of files, telephone work, research and office duties as required.



The applicant must have excellent oral and written communication skills; good knowledge of Microsoft Excel; valid driver's licence and use of automobile; availability to travel throughout Newfoundland & Labrador; and an undergraduate or master's degree in history, archaeology, folklore, or architecture. Previous experience with a heritage organization is an asset. This is an entry-level, one-year contract position with HFNL.

Salary is in the range of \$20-\$25/hour, depending on qualifications. Please send a copy of your cv, three references, and a cover letter describing your interest in heritage work, to:

Hiring Committee

c/o Heritage Foundation of Newfoundland and Labrador

PO Box 5171, St. John's, NL A1C 3A5

ich@heritagefoundation.ca

Deadline for applications: Monday, 15 October, 2012

Photo of Tilting, by Robert Mellin

